

Infliximab (Remicade) Biosimilars

What is a biosimilar?

- An FDA-approved biological product that has no clinically meaningful differences from the original biologic (i.e. Remicade, infliximab)
- Biosimilars were developed to decrease costs and increase access to these very important medications.
- Biosimilars are equally effective as the originator biologic.

Are biosimilars like generic drugs?

- **Yes, but** generic medications are exact copies of drugs as they are small in size
- Due to the size of the molecules, biosimilars are not exact copies. They differ slightly in their structure from the original biologics (i.e. Remicade, infliximab) but these differences do not affect the function of the medication

What are the current infliximab (Remicade) biosimilars?

- Inflectra (Pfizer)
- Renflexis (Merck)
- Avsola (Amgen)

Why am I being asked to start on a biosimilar and not Remicade?

- You are likely being asked to start a biosimilar because of a demand from your insurance company
- There may be savings associated with using a biosimilar product instead of Remicade.

Why am I being asked to switch from Remicade to a biosimilar?

- You are likely being asked to switch your therapy to a biosimilar based on a demand from your insurance company
- There may be savings associated with using a biosimilar product instead of Remicade.

Is it safe to take a biosimilar if I already started treatment on infliximab (Remicade)?

- Yes. The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) requires many tests to show that a biosimilar is an acceptable treatment alternative to infliximab (Remicade).
- Data has shown that it is safe to perform a one-time switch from infliximab (Remicade) to a biosimilar.

What will remain the same?

Compared to infliximab (Remicade), biosimilar products (Inflectra, Renflexis, Avsola):

- Have the same mechanism of action (work the same)
- Are dosed and administered the same way
- Are equally safe and effective
- Provide the same treatment benefits
- Have the same potential side effects

Will I need to change the way I receive my medicine or re-load my dose if I am currently Remicade?

- No. You will continue your current dose and frequency.
- We will continue the same monitoring with your biosimilar as we do with infliximab (Remicade).

Do you recommend appealing to my insurance company?

- In most cases, no. Our practice supports the use of biosimilars. The most important thing is that you receive your medication on time. Appeals are rarely approved and may delay treatment.

References:

- <https://www.fda.gov/drugs/biosimilars/patient-materials>
- <https://gastro.org/practice-guidance/gi-patient-center/topic/biosimilars-faqs/>
- <https://www.crohnscolitisfoundation.org/what-is-ibd/medication/biosimilars>